



# NEWS RELEASE

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**FURTHER INFORMATION:**

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## **Report Card and Star-Quality Program Enjoys Successful First Year**

Parents and caregivers in Tennessee today have more information than ever before when it comes to choosing a child care program.

One year after being implemented, the Child Care Report Card and Star-Quality Program is providing parents with in-depth, standard, easy to access information about the quality of child care agencies, said Department of Human Services Commissioner Natasha K. Metcalf.

Participation in the Report Card component of the program is required for all child care agencies licensed by DHS. Agencies receive their evaluation results on poster-sized Report Cards, which are displayed prominently beside the agency's license.

The cards inform parents about how the agency meets or exceeds minimum state standards in areas such as director qualifications, compliance history, parent/family involvement, and ratio and group size. Report Cards have been issued for all of Tennessee's 3,077 DHS-licensed facilities.

Agencies can apply for Quality Enhancement Grants to help them make program improvements, based on the results of their evaluations. A total of \$1.6 million has been issued to 145 agencies.

In addition to the evaluation, agencies receive an on-site independent assessment of classroom activities, programs and materials. Those assessment scores have seen a steady increase since the program began.

"There's no doubt that the quality of child care in Tennessee is improving as a result of this program," Metcalf said. "During this first year, we've seen average assessment scores go up across the state in every type of classroom.

Comparing scores from the first quarter the program was implemented to the last quarter of its first year, infant and toddler average scores rose 9 percent; preschool scores increased 6.7 percent; school age scores went up 10 percent; and family and home scores rose 12 percent.

Based on the Report Card evaluation, an agency may qualify for the voluntary Star-Quality Program which awards one, two or three stars depending on how much the agency exceeds minimum standards. Agencies that care for children subsidized by the state receive bonuses of 5, 15 and 20 percent based on their star rating.

Sixty-eight percent of agencies evaluated over the past year were eligible to participate in the Star-Quality portion of the program. Of that number, 919 were eligible for three stars, 908 were eligible for two stars, and 278 were eligible for one star.

"We worked very hard to earn our three stars," said JoAnna Beasley, director of Hendersonville Bible Kindergarten and Mother's Day Out. "We had a good program but the standards we followed through the Star-Quality Program guided us in the right direction so that we could become better than what we were. It helped us improve."

Star-Quality participating agencies have the star rating displayed on their report card. In addition, an agency's star rating may be viewed by going to the the department's web site at [www.state.tn.us/humanserv/](http://www.state.tn.us/humanserv/) and clicking on the "Find Child Care Link" on the left side of the page. DHS is also developing a brochure for parents, which will provide details about the program.

"The Star-Quality rating definitely makes a big difference because you can't tell much, just walking into a center, about the level of quality above the minimum standards," said Laura Artates of Nashville, whose 2-year-old son attends a three star agency. "The rating lets you know they are doing something above and beyond what's required to keep your child safe and healthy."